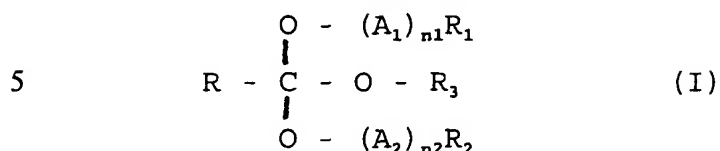


**We claim:**

1. An ortho ester surfactant of the formula



where R is hydrogen or an aliphatic group with 1-7 carbon atoms; R<sub>1</sub> is hydrogen or an alkyl group with 1-5 carbon atoms; A<sub>1</sub> is an alkyleneoxy group with 2-4 carbon atoms, the number of ethyleneoxy groups being at least 50% of the total number of alkyleneoxy groups; n<sub>1</sub> is a number between 1 and 30; R<sub>2</sub> is an aliphatic group with 5-22 carbon atoms; A<sub>2</sub> is an alkyleneoxy group with 3-4 carbon atoms; n<sub>2</sub> is a number between 0-30, provided that when R<sub>2</sub> is an aliphatic group with 5-6 carbon atoms n<sub>2</sub> is at least 1; R<sub>3</sub> is selected from the group consisting of (A<sub>1</sub>)<sub>n<sub>1</sub></sub>R<sub>1</sub>, (A<sub>2</sub>)<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub>R<sub>2</sub> and an alkyl group with 1-6 carbon atoms, where A<sub>1</sub>, n<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, n<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>2</sub> have the same meaning as mentioned above; or a di- or poly-condensate via any of the free hydroxy groups of the ortho ester.

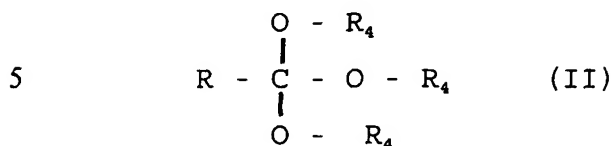
2. The ortho ester surfactant of claim 1, wherein R<sub>1</sub> is an alkyl group with 1-4 carbon atoms.

3. The ortho ester surfactant of claim 1 wherein n<sub>1</sub> is a number between 2-25 and n<sub>2</sub> is a number between 0-20.

4. The ortho ester surfactant of claim 1 wherein n<sub>2</sub> is 0, R<sub>2</sub> is an aliphatic group with 8-22 carbon atoms and A<sub>1</sub> is an ethyleneoxy group.

5. A process for the preparation of the ortho ester

surfactant of claims 1 which comprises reacting an ortho ester of the general formula



where R is hydrogen or an aliphatic group with 1-7 carbon atoms and R<sub>4</sub> is an alkyl group with 1-6 carbon atoms, in one or several steps, with reactants having the formulas  
 10 HO(A<sub>1</sub>)<sub>n<sub>1</sub></sub>R<sub>1</sub> and HO(A<sub>2</sub>)<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub>R<sub>2</sub>, wherein R<sub>1</sub> is hydrogen or an alkyl group with 1-5 carbon atoms; R<sub>2</sub> is an aliphatic group with 5-22 carbon atoms; A<sub>2</sub> is an alkyleneoxy group with 3-4 carbon atoms; A<sub>1</sub> is an alkyleneoxy group with 2-4 carbon atoms, the number of ethyleneoxy groups being at least 50% of the total  
 15 number of alkyleneoxy groups; n<sub>1</sub> is a number between 1 and 30; and n<sub>2</sub> is a number between 0-30, provided that when R<sub>2</sub> is an aliphatic group with 5-6 carbon atoms n<sub>2</sub> is at least 1, while evaporating alcohols with the formula R<sub>4</sub>OH, where R<sub>4</sub> has the same meaning as above.

20

6. An emulsifying agent which comprises at least one ortho ester of claims 1.

7. A dispersing agent which comprises at least one  
 25 ortho ester of claims 1.

8. A cleaning or scouring composition which comprises the ortho ester of claim 1.

30 9. A method of separating a hydrophobic component from an aqueous system which comprises  
 a) emulsifying or dispersing said hydrophobic component in said aqueous system at a pH of 6 or above in the

presence of an ortho ester in accordance with claim 1,

- b) lowering the pH or increasing the temperature of the emulsion or dispersion resulting from step a), or a combination thereof, and thereby breaking the emulsion or dispersion, and
- c) separating the hydrophobic component from the aqueous system.

10 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the temperature in step b is raised to between 20 and 60°C.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the pH in step b is between 4 and 6.

15

12. A dyeing or deinking process which comprises the use of at least one ortho ester of claim 1.

13. A pesticidal formulation which comprises at least one ortho ester of claim 1.

20